

ARS scientists are fired up about spicy, colorful new peppers. Geneticist John R. Stommel, with the ARS Vegetable Laboratory, and collaborator Robert J. Griesbach, of the U.S. National Arboretum's Floral and Nursery Plants Research Unit, both located in Beltsville, Maryland, have developed new ornamental and culinary pepper breeding lines that are pungent or mild and pleasing to the eye. Since the breeding program started in 1991, they have developed about 150 new ornamental breeding lines.

"These new lines—ranging from small Tabasco-type peppers and miniature bells to large, orange, bananawere developed

from a diverse collection of *Capsicum*landraces from India and select heirloom peppers," says

Stommel. "They were selected for fruit and leaf characteristics and plant habit. We wanted showy, attractive plants for ornamental use, culinary use, or both."

New breeding lines include bite-sized miniature bell peppers that are hot or mild and are available in an array of colors. Some new lines have brilliant purple foliage and produce hot-to-mild, yellow-to-red peppers on upright or trailing plants from mid- to late summer.

The peppers are relatively easy to grow as container or landscape plants.

The scientists are cooperating with the Pan American Seed Company to develop and market these peppers for commercial

use.—By Tara Weaver-Missick, ARS.

This research is part of Plant, Microbial, and Insect Genetic Resources, Genomics and Genetic Improvement, an ARS National Program (#301) described on the World Wide Web at http://www.nps.ars.usda.gov.

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